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For Readers Only

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With this issue we are instituting a new feature called “For Readers Only.” The idea is to devote a page of each issue of Against the Grain to books. The individual theme will vary, infinitely, we hope, but the common line will be books, authors, genres, languages, countries, characters. You get the idea. Suggestions for themes are welcomed. We would like to provide some mystery, too, to keep you interested and reading, so a quiz will generally be included as part of this page for readers only.

We want to encourage non-required reading, reading that is nourishment for the soul, refreshing in the summer when it sizzles and warming in the winter when it drizzles.

The theme for this issue is the sea. This will help you solve the quiz that follows. If you are familiar with German, you know that “See” has two watery meanings. Depending on the article used, it can mean sea or lake. Lake Constance, for example, is Der Bodensee in German.

The sea as a theme is more to the point than trout fishing is to Richard Brautigan’s book, Trout Fishing in America, but it is a superficial theme that provides a platform (floating?) for the authors to launch rather long discourses on the meaning of life.

These three books have long been favorites of mine. I had read each of them at least twice before reading them once again over the past holiday season. Each book seems to have improved with age, like fine read wines. I was reminded, too, that each of these books qualify for my “Reading as a Subversive Activity” list.

Can you name these books and their authors from the excerpts below? Two of the books are non-fiction works by famous authors, but only one of the books is famous. One author is of this century, one is from the 19th century. The work of fiction is from the 20th century and was written by a not-so-famous author praised for his works about the sea.

THE EXCERPTS:
A. “How does one organize an expedition: what equipment is taken, what sources read; what are the little dangers and the large ones?”
B. “The sun is but a morning star.”
C. “Be master of yourself. The world is not an oyster to be opened, but quicksand to be passed. If you have wings you can fly over it, if not you may—yes, I am coming now, my dear!—you may quite possibly be sucked in.”

“A” is the first sentence in the body in the body of the work and follows some preliminary matter. “B” is the last sentence of another work, and “C” is part of a speech delivered by a bookseller to a young man. The speech inspires the young man to give up everything and go off to sea.

Please send your answers to me via e-mail <tom@libadm.lib.uoknor.edu>, fax (405/325-7550), or USPS (University of Oklahoma, Bizzell Memorial Library, 401 W. Brooks, Norman, OK 73019-0528).

There is a prize for the first correct answer. A drawing will be held should there be a tie. Good luck!